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Extraterrestrial Pregnancies and Nasal Implants: A Mythologization of Biopower?[1]

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Abstract : Since the 19th century, the medical establishment has increasingly gained control over both bodies and populations, these being the two complementary aspects of what Foucault has called "biopolitics". The Nazi regime may be considered the most accomplished expression of this type of control. This is why it has become an unavoidable, but far from only reference for representations in speculative fictional works. Indeed, Western, so-called democratic societies have also undertaken experiments on the women of populations deemed inferior to their own. The author's anthropological approach allows her to relate such undertakings to the emergence, in science-fiction films of the 1960s, of the motif of the insemination of women by extraterrestrials. She suggests that such accounts be understood as part of a myth-making endeavor upheld by the evolution of Western medical and surgical practices.

Key words: biopolitics, science fiction, extraterrestrial pregnancies, mythology, alien abductions, nasal implants

As part of my anthropological research on contemporary Western representations of reproduction, science fiction films in which women are the object of insemination of extraterrestrial origin came to my attention [1]. This highly traumatic event is usually experienced by them as a result of a form of rape, here, an intrusion into their genital area without their consent and, in most cases, without sexual relations.

In one configuration, the women suddenly find themselves to be pregnant in spite of the fact that they had not had sexual relations – in some cases, they were even virgins – or

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were sterile. Films in this category are *The Village of the Damned*, by Rilla (1960), its sequel, *Children of the Damned* (Leader 1963), and a 1995 remake by Carpenter, all three films being based on a novel by Wyndham (1957), *The Stranger Within*, a movie made for TV by Matheson (1974), and *Godsend* by Beaumont, released in 1980. Similar situations are found in the TV series *X-Files* (Carter 1993-2002) where agent Dana Scully and other female characters become pregnant as a result of occult extraterrestrial experiments and give birth to highly intelligent infants with extraordinary powers. The same holds true for the character of Lili in the TV series *The 4400* (Echevarria and Peters 2004-2007), whose pregnancy is caused by humans of the future, who, like extraterrestrials, possess powers and technology far superior to those of contemporary humans.

In another configuration, the women become pregnant following an abduction by extraterrestrials. They are literally aspirated into a spaceship and placed in a sterilized environment. Unable to move or call for help, the women are nevertheless fully aware of what is happening to them. They find themselves lying on a table naked and surrounded by beings whose faces are indistinguishable or who look like typical extraterrestrials who, with their large heads, resemble fetuses. They insert into the woman's vagina an oblong metallic object. In some cases, a tentacle emerges from the head of one of the extraterrestrials, and it slides between her legs. As a result, the women become pregnant with a baby that develops very rapidly and, as in the examples of the first type, has powers far beyond those of the mother and other humans. The infant is taken from the mother, sometimes while still in the womb, sometimes immediately following, or shortly after, the birth. Its destiny is to join its own kind – superior beings who are responsible for its conception and who are supposedly the only ones capable of properly raising the infant. It seems that the first film about extraterrestrial pregnancies with this fully developed story line is *Intruders* by Dan Curtis, released in 1992, and I shall return to it shortly. *Progeny* by Yuzna, released in 1998, and the American television series *Disparition* by Bohem, that started running in 2002, have a similar plot.

Evolution, Contagion and Child Abductions

It seems likely that the medical establishment's growing influence in gyneco-obstetrics, and an increasingly sophisticated technology to treat women's infertility in Western countries [2] contributed to a cultural imaginary that began in the late 19th century [3]. In the films noted above, the female body is used as a natural incubator to give birth to children of another species whose superiority to contemporary terrestrial humans is

represented by their extraordinary technology. Proof of the extraterrestrials' advanced technology is seen in the spaceships that carried them to earth and in their ability to blithely manipulate the human genome. They are also described as cold and unemotional. Despite their technological achievements, they must rely on women from an inferior species to reproduce themselves.

These fictional accounts refer directly to the evolutionary perspective of contemporary Western societies that indeed tend to hierarchize human groups according to their fertility. In this ordering, the richest and most technologically developed societies are also the least fertile, while the poorer and more "archaic" societies are the most prolific. Thus, a population's degree of evolution is held to be inversely proportional to its fertility rate. It is a fact that hypofertile or infertile individuals in the "most advanced" societies rely increasingly on innovative solutions, such as medically assisted procreation. They also resort to foreign adoptions from the "third world" or from impoverished peoples in emerging countries, the legal requirements of full adoption entailing a permanent and complete break with the adopted child's birth family (Ouellette 1998).

One should note that by the end of the 19th century, there is a tendency to see reproduction between members of distinct ethnic groups and/or enemies as an infection. Leaders feared that women in their countries might be inoculated with the seed of foreign and/or enemy "races" (Moisseeff 2007). From the beginning of World War I onward, wartime rape became a major concern for opposing nations (Audoin-Rouzeau 1995). However, of foremost concern was not the harm caused to the women involved but what the children born as a result of these rapes would become. They were seen as possible future "internal enemies". This view of an enemy's child as a *potentially hostile foreigner,* who was nevertheless indistinguishable from others, does not stem from Nazism only. The latter represents but its most complete and visible expression, having given rise to a clearly articulated ideology and the establishment of a political apparatus to improve the Aryan race and increase its fertility (Hillel and Henry 1975, Conte and Essner 1995, Massin 2000), in other words, a biopolitics of the human species in its most fully developed form. Indeed, the medical establishment's increasingly close control over reproduction, and its accompanying biotechnology and biometrics, are still associated, on the level of representations, with the Nazi regime. The extraterrestrials in the science fiction works I am concerned with here share many features with the master race: their certainty of being superior to members of populations whom they forcibly remove from their usual surroundings; their coldness and impassivity in the face of the suffering they inflict on human specimens in their medical

experiments; their desire to ultimately increase their own population which has become hypofertile due to their increased intelligence and use of technology.

As part of a policy to increase the birth rates of Aryan children, the Nazis opened the first *Lebensborn* (Old High German, "fountains of life") in Germany in 1935 [4]. Their original purpose was to provide a place where “racially acceptable" single mothers could give birth and subsequently abandon their children to the SS, which would ensure their care and their adoption. The SS quickly transformed these centers into meeting places for racially pure German women to conceive children with SS officers. The ultimate goal of these human "stud farms" was to create and develop a "super-race". Children born in the *Lebensborn* were taken by the SS and raised without any contact with their birth mothers.

Between 1940 and 1945, to supplement German losses during the war, the SS forcibly removed children in occupied territories from their families if they met Nazi racial criteria (blond hair, blue eyes, etc.). Over 200,000 children, among whom a large number of infants, were stolen by the SS from Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic countries. Those who were already in school were sent to special centers for "Aryan" education and were marked for adoption by SS families. Concurrently, medical experiments were performed in death and concentration camps on human guinea pigs without their consent and in larger numbers than previously imagined.

However, focusing on the Nazis makes it easy to forget that Western countries that no one would think of branding as Nazis also abducted children belonging to disadvantaged populations. In Great Britain, many children temporarily placed in institutions by their parents in times of financial difficulty were sent to work in the colonies and disappeared from public records (Bean and Melville 1989). In Australia, mixed-blood children were systematically removed by force from their Aboriginal families and placed in institutions or given up for adoption to white families in need of children (Edwards and Read 1989; Read 1999); it was hoped that living with white families would raise the children’s intelligence. In Israel, just after World War II, many infants from poor, large Yemeni families were declared dead at birth and given to Ashkenazi families who had lost their own children to the Shoah (Greenberg, 1997; Jones and Murphy 2001; Weiss 2003) [5.]

Along the same lines, in the US, the birth control pill was tested on Puerto Rican women, who were seen as having too many children (Press 1973). Similarly, North Americans sterilized women from African and South American countries in the name of birth control undertaken to ensure these populations’ so-called well-being (Hartmann 1995, Kuumba 1999).

Nasal Implants and Anesthesia

Science fiction is not just an exercise in anticipating the future, but also tells us about our present and our past. It does so by using means of its own, namely those of mythology in an anthropological sense of the term, a distancing mode that in the case of the works I refer to here, relies on extraterrestrials, who are sufficiently remote from us to allow us to use them to speculate freely on our own practices (Moisseeff 2005, 2013). In this regard, medical research and new techniques it brought about occupy a privileged position. Indeed, since the 19th century, they have exercised an unprecedented control over the body, and over populations, these being the two faces of what Michel Foucault called the biopolitics of the human species [6]. It is thus logical to think that this powerful mythopoetic brew gave rise to the new mythological corpus known as science fiction. As Meurger brilliantly shows (1995, 1996), we must also assume that these works have in turn nourished the imaginary world of people in a cultural context where biotechnology is exceedingly prominent in practice and on the level of social representations [7].

At this point in my analysis, I have evoked only how science fiction puts the control-over-populations aspect of biopolitics into play. I will now attempt to show how science fiction also makes use of the particularly exemplary control over the bodies of individuals by medical authorities. To do this, I turn to a recurrent motif in some of the films already mentioned: the placing of an implant in the nose of women who have been abducted and impregnated by extraterrestrials, which is revealed by repeated bleeding from the nose. I was astonished to discover that this motif is recent, appearing only in the 1990s and then only relatively rarely; no doubt it will become increasingly common in the future.

In the tradition of the structuralist analysis of myths (Levi-Strauss 1955), that which affects the upper body can symbolically refer to that which is happening in the lower body (Héritier 1989). It is a fact that the introduction of an instrument to inseminate a woman often causes bleeding, but in extraterrestrial or real pregnancies, apart from the developing child itself, nothing remains of the object used for insemination. The women in science fiction are thereby deprived of evidence that would validate their extraterrestrial claims. Apart from other women who tell of the same experience and who are often in the same therapy groups, no one believes the women's stories and they are seen as crazy. This is where hypnotic regression makes a powerful comeback in science fiction movies. Under hypnosis, the women are led to talk about their abduction experiences, and also to draw what they saw –

men from another world, the site where they were taken, and even the symbols inscribed on the extraterrestrials' instruments.

The inaugural film of these extraterrestrial pregnancies, as noted above, is Curtis' *Intruders* released in 1992. It is directly inspired by the book of the same name published in 1987. Although the book itself was not a science fiction novel, its author, Budd Hopkins, was involved in writing the movie screenplay. Hopkins is an investigator into UFO phenomena – everything related to unidentified flying objects – and in 1975, he began to collect the stories of people who claimed to have been abducted by extraterrestrials [8]. His aim was to help them by getting their stories validated by the scientific community. In order to do this, he collaborated with an internationally known Harvard psychiatrist, Dr. John Mack, who carried out deep hypnotic regressions on people who claimed to have been abducted. By the end of his research, Dr. Mack became increasingly convinced of the reality of the phenomena alleged by his patients (see Mack 1992). Here fiction overlaps with the experiences of real people, all the more so that the character Dr. Neil Chase in the movie *Intruders* obviously represents Dr. John Mack.

However, finding an implant in the body of persons claiming to have been abducted by extraterrestrials is much stronger proof of their abduction than an account told under hypnosis. It is the only tangible proof that those concerned might be able to present. Here again, the ever-resourceful medical establishment found the man for the job: a podiatric surgeon, Dr. Roger Leir, who, with his colleagues, carried out surgery on persons who had claimed to have been abducted with the aim of removing their extraterrestrial implants.

As Dr. Leir describes in his book, *The Aliens and the Scalpel* (1998), these surgical operations are preceded by X-ray procedures to locate the implants, and psychological examinations to confirm that the patients are mentally healthy, and followed by detailed analyses of the implant in order to demonstrate that it was the product of an alien technology. Reading the book did not teach me much, except that all the people involved, including those who claimed to have been kidnapped, generally led extremely ordinary lives. But the credence given in some circles to this type of abduction stories or to the investigations they give rise to, as well as the media coverage they receive, transform the very ordinary lives of those involved into extraordinary ones. They become international stars, their adventures are made into Hollywood films, and/or become the subject of novels and biographies. These narratives then become the starting point for new adventures recounted, as might be expected, with some variations, by others [9].

Dr. John Mack, the Harvard hypnotist, who died in 2004, believed in the possible existence of another dimension of reality, and that these individuals had access to it. I go along with this, up to a certain point. Indeed, many elements in their stories lead me to believe that the events they evoke should be appreciated in the context of experiences that took place during very real surgical procedures, and, given the age of the individuals in question, the model may well be the removal of their tonsils and adenoids. Here we have an ENT (ear, nose and throat) concern that makes the connection with the motif of nasal implants.

The "abductees" describe flashbacks of being brought to an operating room; their clothes are removed and sometimes they are dressed in a surgical gown. Unable to speak or move, they are surrounded by individuals whose faces are indistinguishable and who communicate with them not on a verbal level but by means of telepathy. As noted above, in the framework of a structuralist analysis, the upper body and orifices may symbolically refer to the lower body. The inverse is also true: a surgical procedure in the mouth and throat region may well be recalled as an intrusion into the genital area, all the more so that, at the time when a mask was used to administer anesthesia, the procedure was particularly violent, as has been described by an anaesthetist, Dr. David Cohen-Salmon, in his 1994 book *En travers de la gorge* (“Stuck in the Throat”). Although not rape in the usual sense of the word, this surgical operation was definitely a form of violence exercised on an immobilized body in a highly altered state of consciousness. Physicians believe that people in a deep coma are capable of remembering what goes on around them, so it follows that the same may be true for some people who have been anaesthetized, especially when the anesthesia is transitory, as it is for this seemingly benign ENT (ear, nose and throat) procedure. It also happens that people who are deeply anesthetized sometimes wake up. Finally, women having had a loco-regional anesthesia for a caesarean section have told me that they could see the incision being made because it was reflected on the surgical lamp above them in spite of the latter’s blinding glare.

It is understandable that these events could be experienced as traumatic, possibly leading to post-traumatic stress syndrome with recurring flashbacks of the traumatizing experience, which could end up by obsessing those concerned. In such cases, the patient can sometimes be helped by recounting the traumatic experience. It is never possible to be sure that such accounts, like those reported under hypnosis undertaken for similar reasons, are faithful to reality. On the contrary, the more the person tells the story, the more s/he distances him or herself from the lived experience, and the more s/he is inclined to introduce elements

that were not initially there. This process helps a patient gain control, if not of the traumatic event, at least of the narrative. Indeed, the goal of such an undertaking is to introduce a degree of detachment, sometimes through a fictional account, which will help a person recover control where s/he once had none.

This process of creating a narrative about a traumatic event has some parallels with the biographies written by American hypnotherapists in the '60s and '70s about patients who had been sexually abused. The patients said they experienced a sort of split during the abuse and would see themselves floating above the scene of the rape. These narratives may have provided a framework for the creation of narratives of alien abduction [10].

In this context, it should perhaps be noted that accounts of child sexual abuse began to appear in the wake of the identification of the battered child syndrome by Dr. Frederic Silverman, an American radiologist and pediatrician, in 1953 (Hacking 1998). The diagnosis for this syndrome is based on X-ray evidence of fractures, suspicious scars, bruises and hematomas in young children (Kempe, Silverman *et al*. 1962). People who claim to have been abducted by aliens, in addition to X-rays of their implants, are also purported to have distinctive indentations on their skin, and to be especially prone to bruising. Again we see how the media's role in sensationalizing medical news, especially in the US where it has a long history and is frequently done, can play a role in the development of biographical and fictional accounts of alien abductions.

Contemporary medical and surgical practices, including anesthesia and the increasingly commonplace occurrence of hospitalization and surgery, participate in the control-over-the-body aspect of the biopolitics which began to be implemented, according to Foucault, towards the end of the 18th century. These practices, along with the immobilization resulting from general anesthesia, only became the norm much later. Like all social practices, they have given rise to different orders of fictionalization to which ordinary people – those to whom these practices were applied – can contribute.

Therefore, I propose to see stories of alien abduction and implants as the emblematic expression of an emerging mythology in which contemporary Western cultural experiences, particularly those pertaining to medicine and surgery, are given representational form. As in all cases of mythological creation, this process entails displacement and condensation.

Notes

[1] See Moisseeff 2000, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 a, b, c 2013.

[2] See, among others, Moisseeff 2013 & 2010, Foucault *et al* 2006, Knibiehler 2002, Giami 2000, Oudhsoorn 1994, Reilly 1991.
[3] For the history and complete list of science fiction works in which extraterrestrials perform medical procedures and are associated with narratives by real people of flying saucer abductions from the 1960s, see Meurger 1995. For a more classic fictionalization of the theme of occult sterilization by doctors that can be traced back to real medical practices of ovariectomies in the second half of the 19th century (Oudshoorn 1998), see Delamotte 2003.
[4] I am referring primarily here to Hillel and Henry 1975, Ericsson and Simonsen 2005. For a fictionalization of real biographical facts, see Huston 2006.
[5] Many thanks to Dror Mishani for this information and references.
[6] In regard to Foucault's use of the neologism "biopolitics" and the historicized conceptualization attached to it, see, for example, Foucault, 1997, 2004a and b, and Foucault *et al*., 2006.
[7] Thanks to Véronique Campion-Vincent for references to this author, and for providing me with his 1996 article.
[8] Anthropologists carried out research based on these narratives (Méheust 1985 [1978], Lagrange 1990). For more information about an investigation by Budd Hopkins and Dr. Mack, and their biographical notes, see Stefula et al. 1993.
[9] Apparently I am not alone in remarking on the singularly ordinary lives of the abductees and those around them; see the online reference for Kottmeyer's caustic remarks in the bibliography. Blogs by people claiming to have been abducted, or wondering if it had happened to them, are also instructive; see also the portraits that emerge from the accounts recorded by Méheust *op. cit*. and Lagrange *op. cit*. Ian Hacking (1995: 36) makes a similar point regarding people with multiple personality syndrome who, like the "abductees", complain of amnesia: these "ordinary […] Americans to whom nobody else pays much attention" are nonetheless invited to appear on Oprah Winfrey's and Geraldo Rivera's talk-shows by virtue of their unusual syndrome. As in the case of the alien abductees, their narratives are destined to become the object of various publications and to be transformed into literary and film fictionalizations.
[10] I am indebted to Samuel Minne for telling me about the film *Mysterious Skin* by Araki (2005) based on Heim's novel of the same name (1995). It chronicles a young boy's experience of amnesia after being sexually abused by his baseball coach and his subsequent problems that led him to wonder if he had been abducted by extraterrestrials who had performed medical experiments on him. This story is even more interesting because it is not science fiction, yet when the young man is confronted with events that revive the memory masked by his trauma, he begins to bleed profusely from the nose. Here is an example of an intrusion in the genital area which is re-lived as a disruption in the ENT (ear, nose and throat) region. We are dealing here with the inverse of what I have suggested underlies the nasal implant narratives which are masked rememberings of a surgical intrusion into the oropharyngeal area. I also thank Samuel Minne for referring me to a science fiction story by Disch (1992) about a sci-fi/fantasy author whose dire financial straits force him to write a supposedly true story about the abduction of his daughter (though he is not married and has no offspring). With this story, Disch mocks the commercial successes of abduction stories, shows that the genre can be self-reflexive and acknowledges, in a roundabout and playful

way, the role of science fiction in such allegations. In both examples, fiction offers us a valuable way to meditate on our cultural practices.

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